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ABSTRACT

This book is an analysis of the educational experiences of the generation of women students who attended U.S. colleges and universities during the Progressive Era (1890-1920). Five case studies examine the evolution of campus life at various schools in the United States. Three single-sex institutions, Vassar College (New York), Sophie Newcomb College (Louisiana) and Agnes Scott College (Georgia), shared a common determination to make women's higher education equivalent to that available to men. Differences among them reflected regional social structures. Progressivism, suffragism, interest in career, and a close relationship between students and faculty were the earmarks of Vassar; but students at the two southern schools had fewer ties to faculty, were less likely to seek careers, and had little interest in suffrage. At the University of California (Berkeley), women found themselves on a male-dominated campus, with a structure of class tradition and interclass rivalry; ultimately they had to challenge men for control and demand redefinition of gender roles. The University of Chicago (Illinois), a leading center for graduate study, offered unusual opportunities for both women students and faculty; eventually however, the growing influence of women's culture was viewed as an encroachment on men's spheres and led to the establishment of single-sex classes. (Contains approximately 600 references.) (CH)

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